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ABSTRACT

The problem of sex bias in textbooks, particularly at the elementary level, is treated in this report. Sexism is defined and discussed in relation to the current women's movement. Research findings, as well as examples taken from various texts, indicate sex stereotyping and discrimination in instructional materials. A list of available remedies and resources for those who want to challenge sexism in education is included. It is recommended that teachers take a more critical look at the materials they are currently using in their classrooms in an attempt to identify implicit sex bias and discrimination. (LL)

EPIC

Educational Product 'In Brief'

REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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Sex Stereotyping in Instructional Materials

Number 57

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Introduction

This *EPIE Report* is an in-brief look at the real problem of sex bias in textbooks. Although our emphasis is on elementary-level texts, *EPIE* is not limiting this information to elementary educators. The issue of sex stereotyping in instructional materials must be of prime concern to all educators—though, for obvious reasons, elementary educators are in a position to make a more lasting impression on the minds of human beings whose self-image is not yet stereotyped.

Educators in secondary schools and colleges, though working with students whose at-

titudes are more likely to be established, must maintain the responsibility for identifying, explaining, and correcting sex bias in instructional materials just as they are now required by law to do with cases of racial bias as they may appear in textbooks and related materials.

There is some evidence that the publishing industry is beginning to take the problem of sex stereotyping seriously, and one publishing firm, Scott, Foresman and Company, has issued a set of guidelines for improving the image of women in textbooks. But this is only a first step. The Department of Health, Education and

Welfare is now developing guidelines prohibiting exclusion from educational programs on the basis of sex discrimination.

This *EPIE Report* is, as noted, only an in-brief study. But *EPIE* can promise you this: if you read it carefully, and absorb the important nature of its content, you will never be quite the same again. If you become as concerned as *EPIE* hopes you will be, there are many things enumerated in the conclusion which you can do to begin to improve the situation right now in your school.

Where It All Begins

"Sexism refers to all those attitudes and actions which relegate women to a secondary and inferior status in society. Textbooks are sexist if they omit the actions and achievements of women, if they demean women by using patronizing language, or if they show women only in stereotyped roles with less than the full range of human interests, traits, and capabilities."

"Textbooks should treat women as the equals of men. Although in the past women were regarded as inferior, they were not and are not inferior people. The sexist attitudes of the past should not be reflected in current publications."

Until the emergence of women's rights as a national issue, stereotyping and sex biases have been complacently accepted in textbooks and educational materials. Elementary school readers portray boys as innovative and active while girls are usually limited to roles of future "mommies". Has anyone ever seen a history book describing the adventures of our "forewomen"? A critical glance at practically any American history book indicates that this country has grown and maintained itself with a 99% male population. Sex bias in secondary

* *Improving the Image of Women in Textbooks*, Scott, Foresman and Company: Glenview, Illinois, 1972.

education is not as blatant as that on the elementary level but it is just as damaging. Women are generally ignored instead of being openly maligned; if their achievements and concerns are mentioned at all, it is usually in a superficial manner. The typical United States history textbook generously devotes one out of its 500 to 800 pages to women, their problems, and contributions.*

The effects of sex stereotyping on students is obvious in a report by the National Assessment Study. They found little difference in the science writing of boys and girls at age nine, but the gap widened at ages thirteen, seventeen and adulthood.**

No area is obviously more biased than that of career education. Motherhood is stressed as the primary career for girls; girls are encouraged to pursue a career that requires minimum training and that can be discontinued and resumed according to the demands of being a parent. There are no paths that boys are urged to follow in order to be better husbands and fathers.

The New York Chapter of the National Organization of Women in a *Report on Sex Bias in the Public Schools* examined a number of junior high school mathematics and science books. A seventh-grade mathematics book contained twenty-six activities for boys and fifteen for girls. The girls' activities were largely passive — buying chocolate creams and walking to school. Male activity included gardening, painting, hiking, cutting a board. Girls earn "extra" money by babysitting. However, boys earn money (never referred to as "extra") by much more active methods — delivering groceries or

* City University of New York's Teacher Leadership Program Seminar, Spring, 1973.

** *National Assessment of Educational Progress: Assessment Reports No. 4, No. 5, No. 7 and No. 9* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970-71).

paper routes.

In junior high school texts, female scientists and mathematicians are omitted. The N.O.W. report states: "A girl could not help but conclude that there are no female mathematicians; and if there are, they have never done anything worthwhile."

Most of the textbooks in use in public schools and libraries today have the same weaknesses as those found in a recent study of educational materials in the State of Pennsylvania. The study found an:

"... underrepresentation of women; representation in limited stereotyped roles — wives, mothers, teachers, nurses, secretaries, and other service-oriented jobs; reinforcement of culturally conditioned sexist characteristics showing as female such traits as dependency, passivity, noncompetitive spirit and emotionality; and a very meager appreciation of women's contributions to history, literature, science and other areas of American life..."*

* *Sexism in Education: Joint Task Force Report*, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1972.

Coming next month:
EPIE's In Depth Report on
**THREE INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEMS:
PLAN,* IGE, and IPI**

"I'm Glad I'm a Boy."

"I'm Glad I'm a Girl." **

A little lamb asks her mother what she can be and mother replied: "Some day you will be a sheep. A mother sheep, just like me! That is what you can be." (Harper & Row Basic Reading Program "Around the Corner" Primer Level.

"Girls are always late." (Ginn Basic Reader Book Six)

"Look at her, Mother, just look at her. She is just like a girl. She gives up." (Harper & Row Basic Reading Program Primer Level.

"We are willing to share our great thoughts with mankind. However, you happen to be a girl." ("Smart Anna-belle", Ventures, Scott, Foresman and Company).

Rigid designation of one set of interests and behavior is detrimental to the development of both sexes, but this sort of sex stereotyping in elementary school texts is particularly damaging to girls. Girls are often locked into sexist

roles which are not equal to the roles assigned to boys.

"Boys have trucks. Girls have dolls.

Boys are doctors. Girls are nurses.

Boys are presidents. Girls are first ladies.

Boys fix things. Girls need things fixed.

Boys build houses. Girls keep houses."*

The typical elementary reader portrait of a girl is either silly, helpless, or crying. She is always passive. Quite often she doesn't exist at all. On the other hand, the elementary text boy is omnipresent, brave, adventurous, clever, and active. These characteristics are just as prevalent in recent series as they are in the old Dick and Jane readers.

Alpha One

Alpha One, a phonetic decoding program for teaching beginning reading, was selected by the American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, California, as one of the ten best compensatory education programs in the country. It is estimated that this program is being utilized in approximately 8,000 classrooms at this time.

In 1972, EPIE reviewed the *Alpha One* reading program in *EPIE In-Brief Report No. 40*. EPIE raved: "It is now becoming banal to state that instructional materials should capture the wonder, joy, magic, and pain of the young child's learning; but the *Alpha One* materials do seem to represent these elusive qualities." This is the impressive reading package that says: "A girl, a girl, oh go away. A girl's no good for work or play."

EPIE, of course, realizes now that we should have been more aware of the built-in sex bias in the reading program. This only proves again that sex discrimination in instructional materials is rampant.

* *Dick and Jane vs Victims, Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers*. An analysis by Women on Words & Images, Princeton, New Jersey 1972.

tional materials is so taken for granted that we must restructure our thinking in order to become more aware of them.

The *Alpha One* program has an alphabet of twenty-one "letter boy" consonants and five female vowels. Through textbooks, filmstrips, and records these letters work together to make words. One girl vowel has trouble walking, another has the itch, and all want the boy consonants to like them. One girl vowel cries: "Protection is what our short sounds need; the boys should protect us—is that agreed?"

Dick and Jane vs Victims is a particularly articulate analysis of sex bias by a group called Women on Words and Images, Princeton, New Jersey. This study looked at 134 readers from fourteen different publishers currently in use in New Jersey schools. Of the 2,760 total stories studied, 942 featured men and boys and 35 featured girls and women. The rest featured either boys and girls, animals or fantasy. Women were found employed in twenty-six occupations and men in 147. The ratio of biographical stories continues the trend. They found twenty-seven biographies about seventeen women and 119 biographies about eighty-eight men.

Biographies of Males

Carl Ethan Akeley

Alexander the Great

Leo Baekeland

Auguste Bartholdi

Alexander Graham Bell

Daniel Boone

Louis Braille

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* Whitney, Darrow, *I'm Glad I'm a Boy. I'm Glad I'm a Girl*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970).

Biographies of Females

Amelia Earhart
Joan of Arc
Marian Anderson
Jane Addams
Mary Anning
Mary McLeod Bethune
Carol Rylie Brink
Emily Carr
Marie Curie
Babe Didrikson
Helen Keller
Emily Kimbrough
Emma Lazarus
Pocahontas
Maria Mitchell
Leontyne Price
Annie Oakley

Dr. Charles H. Mayo
Dr. William J. Mayo
Garrett Morgan
John Muir
Issac Newton
Noah
Jesse Owens
Robert Edwin Peary
Admiral Matthew Calbraith Perry
Oliver Perry
Marco Polo
Major John Wesley Powell
Joseph Pulitzer
Israel Putnam
Paul Revere
Jacob Riis
Jackie Robinson
John Roebling
Washington Roebling
Wilhelm von Röntgen
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Babe Ruth
Carl Sandburg
Heinrich Schliemann
Dr. Albert Schweitzer
Captain Robert Falcon Scott
Sequoyah
Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton
Alan B. Shepard
John Philip Sousa
Levi Strauss
Nikola Tesla
Henry David Thoreau
Jim Thorpe
George Washington
Benjamin West
Dr. Daniel Hale Williams
John Wise
Frank Lloyd Wright
Orville Wright
Wilbur Wright

Abbe Breuil
James Bridger
Ralph Johnson Bunche
Scott Carpenter
Dick Button
Kit Carson
George Washington Carver
John Colter
Christopher Columbus
James Cook
Pierre Curie
Glenn Curtis
Father Damien
Thomas Edison
Albert Einstein
John Elder
Leif Ericsson
Cyrus W. Field
Dr. Fleming (Sir Alexander)
Henry Ford
Benjamin Franklin
Galileo
Lou Gehrig
John Glenn
Robert Hutchings Goddard
Charles Goodyear
Matthew Henson
Sir Edmund Percival Hillary
Ben Hogan
Houdini
Andrew Jackson
John Paul Jones
James Edward Jouett
Darryl Kays
Francis Scott Key
Pierre Charles l'Enfant
Juan Ponce de Leon
John C. Lilly
Abraham Lincoln
Toussaint Louverture
Magellan
Mickey Mantle
Matthew Fontaine Maury

	Allyn & Bacon	American Book Co.	Bank Street	Ginn	Harper and Row	D.C. Heath	Houghton-Mifflin	Laidlaw	Lyons & Carnehan	MacMillan	Open Court	Science Research Associates	Scott, Foresman	New S.T. Reading System	Singer/Randon, House	Sullivan	TOTAL
# Books Read	3	6	7	10	6	7	9	5	9	9	2	10	13	12	5	21	134
Total # Stories	85	175	116	361	130	176	151	81	100	165	81	221	321	110	94	393	2,760
Featuring Boys	31	42	43	107	40	49	63	10	34	48	4	62	116	28	30	116	823
Featuring Girls	7	25	17	31	13	12	24	1	6	13	3	17	42	11	0	99	319
Featuring Adult Males	1	10	7	7	8	3	21	4	3	12	7	24	0	2	8	2	119
Featuring Adult Females	0	2	2	7	4	2	9	0	0	1	2	5	1	2	0	0	37
Boy and Girl	8	16	18	79	6	20	5	3	10	15	4	13	76	9	3	105	390
Male Animal	2	6	1	12	1	20	3	21	4	8	24	2	1	6	14	1	126
Female Animal	3	0	2	14	2	7	1	2	1	5	7	5	1	1	3	1	55
Male Folk Fantasy	7	17	2	34	16	21	9	22	6	16	14	15	6	7	12	6	210
Female Folk Fantasy	1	4	1	6	2	4	3	6	3	0	15	4	1	0	4	3	57
Male Biography	16	11	1	9	18	12	6	7	13	17	0	15	22	16	6	0	169
Female Biography	3	3	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	5	1	1	0	27
Other: Science, Neuter Animal, Social, etc.	6	39	22	52	16	26	7	5	20	25	1	57	50	27	13	60	426
Occupations Shown for Men	22	25	24	24	26	30	29	14	13	33	Not Listed	21	33	35	13	25	
Occupations Shown for Women	7	7	5	2	2	3	9	3	2	5	Not Listed	5	5	11	2	7	

Where Do We Go From Here?

There are a number of available remedies for those who want to challenge sexism in education.

- Under Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1972, sex discrimination in federally financed educational programs is illegal. Title IX provides that:

"No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Guidelines for carrying out this legislation are currently being drawn up by the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. These guidelines are being circulated, and by law must be published in the Federal Register to provide an opportunity for citizen comment, possible revision and Presidential approval. As the guidelines are now drawn, they do not include educational textbooks and instructional materials.

People who are interested in non-sexist instructional materials are urged to follow the progress of the guidelines to Title IX and they may make their opinions known by writing to The Honorable Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C. 20201.

- Hinging upon the Title IX guidelines is litigation in Kalamazoo, Michigan. A test case has been brought by the Committee to Study Sex Discrimination charging discrimination against females in a set of Houghton Mifflin elementary school reading texts adopted by

Kalamazoo Public Schools. It is not clear yet whether sexist materials are illegal under Title IX.

In the meantime the Kalamazoo School District has completely re-written the teaching guide which came with the Houghton Mifflin series to make it completely unbiased, which only goes to show that the producers, with a little effort, could eliminate sex discrimination from their materials.

Aside from Title IX, three states have taken further positive steps to eliminate bias in their educational materials.

- The New York State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education have issued Position Paper No. 14 calling for the revision of textbooks and course content. Copies are available through: State Department of Education, Albany, N.Y. 12224.

- The Pennsylvania Department of Education has guidelines available for the elimination of stereotyped instructional materials. For a copy of their report on Sexism in Education write to: Joint Task Force Report, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Box 911, Harrisburg, Pa. 17126.

- In Massachusetts, Chapter 622 of the General Acts of 1971 makes sex discrimination in courses of study in public schools illegal.

Additional Resources

EPTE also would like to make its members aware of other resources that are available to them in their attempts to eliminate sex role stereotyping in schools.

- The National Foundation for Improvement of Education has established a Resource Center on Sex Roles in Education. The functions of the Center are:

- To prepare materials for schools to

reduce sex biases

- To set up a national clearinghouse of materials and resource people
- To provide technical assistance to research and action projects
- To publish a newsletter

For further information write to: Resource Center on Sex Roles in Education, 1156 — 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

— The Clearinghouse on Women's Studies, an education project of The Feminist Press, has compiled a variety of feminist resources for use in schools. One of their primary aims is to enable teachers to locate materials to create unbiased curricula. *Feminist Resources for Schools and Colleges, a Guide to Curricular Materials* includes a primer of basic reading on sexism in education, guidelines for curriculum and textbooks, and strategies. They have included prices, addresses, and availability of most items. EPTE believes that this publication is a must for educators. It is available for \$1.00, plus 26¢ postage through The Feminist Press, SUNY/College at Old Westbury, Box 334, Old Westbury, N.Y. 11568.

— Feminists on Children's Media in their bibliography of recommended non-sexist books for young readers:

"... looked for a positive and non-stereotyped portrayal of girls and women. This usually involved: girls and boys participating equally in both physical and intellectual activities; female characters leading active and independent lives; girls having a variety of choices and aspiring to a variety of goals; male characters respecting female characters and responding to them as equals."

Little Miss Muffet Fights Back is available from Feminists on Children's Media, P.O. Box 4315,

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10017.

— In November 1972 the National Education Association held a national conference on the impact of feminist concerns on public education. Included in the conference working papers — called *Education for Survival, Sex Role Stereotypes* — are several articles on ways to lessen sex bias in the classroom.

Conclusion

Perhaps the only conclusion this *Report* can draw is that sex bias in instructional materials is a very real problem, one to be resolved by awakening the consciousness of publishers, as well as educators. This *Report* is just the very first of many steps to be taken.

EPIE recommends that its members take a more critical look at the materials they are currently using in their classrooms. We hope that after reading this *Report* our members will understand how sexism is institutionalized in instructional materials. And EPIE hopes we can help to eliminate it by identifying available resources and passing them on to our members.